

Interview with DAVID SHANNON

Transcript

For the Diversifying the Bar: Lawyers Make History Project
Law Society of Upper Canada

Interviewee: David Shannon [DS]

Interviewer: Allison Kirk-Montgomery [AKM]

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Transcribed by Planet Shift Inc., edited by Allison Kirk-Montgomery, and reviewed by David Shannon.

[Transcript has been edited by Allison Kirk-Montgomery to improve clarity, i.e. false starts, many instances of “um” and “uh” have not been included in this transcription.]

AKM: Good morning, David.

DS: Good morning.

AKM: David Shannon, you and I are here at the Cambridge Suites in Toronto and it's Halloween, 31st of October, 2011. I'm interviewing you on behalf of the

Law Society of Upper Canada for the project called, Diversifying the Bar, Lawyers Make History. How are you today?

DS: Wonderful, thank you.

AKM: I know you're in town this week, or actually you're in Ottawa this week because you're going to be invested with the Order of Canada and I would like to congratulate you.

DS: Yes. Thank you.

AKM: And we're going to talk about your advocacy work but also I'd like to focus on your work as a lawyer, and your beginnings in the legal profession.

DS: Yes.

AKM: Why don't we go back to the beginning actually. I think you were born in Nova Scotia?

DS: Born in Thunder Bay. I was raised in Nova Scotia.

AKM: So that's the Thunder Bay connection.

DS: That's the Thunder Bay connection but yes, in most respects my roots are in Nova Scotia as a result, because that's where my formative years were.

AKM: You have brothers and sisters?

DS: Yes I do, two sisters.

AKM: And are they out in Nova Scotia?

DS: No, one in the London area, Ontario, and the other in Edmonton.

AKM: What did your parents do that took you from Thunder Bay to Nova Scotia?

DS: My father went to graduate school in Colorado. He was a professor. At that point being an academic I guess was something like a military career by the way you moved.

AKM: True.

DS: You finished grad school. Went to first we moved to Philadelphia and then we moved to Halifax.

AKM: What was he a professor of?

DS: Of Health Education.

AKM: Oh, I see.

DS: And later, toward the end of my high [school], he moved to Toronto. So that's why the family moved on to Ontario and I stayed to finish high school in Nova Scotia and then later played for the Nova Scotia rugby team.

AKM: Yes. Then that's maybe why you came to Waterloo or you chose Waterloo as an undergrad?

DS: Yes, exactly.

AKM:: That brings us to the accident that changed everything for you.

DS: Yes.

AKM: Can you tell me a little bit about it?

DS: Sure. I have a C5 spinal cord injury, meaning at the fifth vertebrae in my neck, or fourth and fifth vertebrae, they were broken. As a result of the break in the bones, they severed the spinal cord at that point. As I've just mentioned, I was playing for the Nova Scotia Junior Rugby Team at the Canada Games and it was quite exciting, not only being on that provincial team but also that year the Canada Games were in Thunder Bay where I still had quite a bit of family. So it was wonderful to sort of go back. It was a wonderful summer. And then I began university and a couple of weeks in, on the 23rd of September, I was at a practice, we were practising a scrum. The coach had put me in at the position of tight head prop and that's right in the front row on the right side. My usual position was in the middle, and I was smaller than the other men. At that point, I had only just turned eighteen and was about five foot only about five seven or eight and I was quite a bit smaller than the other varsity players. So the scrum collapsed and I was driven forward into the ground headfirst. As a result, you know, having hit my head—and my arms were held upward in the scrum position—so I was driven headfirst into the ground and that broke my neck. And um, so at that point I was paralyzed from the chest down. I went through all the period from the 23rd of September barely getting out of bed until around Christmas time, I think it was 23rd of December and then a period of rehabilitation and then getting back to school; all of the sort of things of adjustment to life, education, work, family, figuring out housing and transportation. All the things that anyone with a spinal cord injury really has to do.

AKM: Did it take you long to realize that this would be a permanent disability?

DS: Yeah, well in a way. I could tell you of course from my personal experience and this is something I'm sure most people with spinal cord injuries would say, is, in a way there is a period, a suspension of disbelief. Certainly after the accident. Because you don't know what your thrust into. It's almost too much of a change. And in terms of the change you're still rehabilitating a bit. At that point, they would put you in traction. So I had weights hanging from my head of thirty five pounds to, to keep me in full body traction, and entirely immobile at first. Later I received what's called a halo vest and that's a vest where you have a fibreglass vest with bars for immobilizing your head. That means you can get up out of bed more quickly. I received that later but in Waterloo they weren't doing that at the time. So you're going from 100% immobility. You're slowly progressing, there's physio, and then you read in some cases there's what's called an incomplete break and that's where there's swelling, they're paralyzed, but then the swelling goes and they walk out of here. Then there's other people who have what's called a complete break and sure enough, they're going to be paralyzed for the rest of their life. I guess you can say unfortunately I was the latter. You know it takes time and, and really it's an acute period. The important thing for me was I had people around me, my family and my friends, people so wonderfully supportive and that was the main focus. As I say it was an acute, critical period and so you're just worried about health on a day-to-day basis. Then over the next number of months that's when the realizations [come]—because really, it takes at least a year to know fully what the prognosis is. That's truly what my neurosurgeon was telling me and the medical experts too, that it would take at least a year to know the full prognosis. But I'd say in about six months it, it began to settle in terms of this is where I'm at and now I have to, based on this start setting, resetting my goals.

AKM: Which you did really quite quickly...

DS: Yeah.

AKM: —at least looking at your book. Tell me about that period.

DS: Well the dream always remained the same, you know. I think if you asked me, although I was young, “What were my interests, what were my passions before my accident?”—they haven’t changed. And quite frankly I don’t really know if I know anyone with spinal cord injury or other major injury or disease really lose themselves in that respect, or their dreams; they get altered.

AKM: What was your dream?

DS: If you were to look at high school and what was developing, I was very interested in dramatic arts, and very interested in school government, and work in extracurricular activities. So I’d say that even then there was a sense of budding advocacy, budding public advocacy. I’m sure I would have probably followed many of the similar tracks, you know. I’m sure I would have gone to law school. I’m very sure that I would have followed very much the same course.

AKM: So do you have lawyers in the family or did you know lawyers for instance? Why would you choose law?

DS: I chose—law for several reasons. [pause] First, and I’m sure you hear this often, I don’t wish to sound trite, because there’s an element of ambiguity to it, but when you want to work with organizations and individuals, going from a sense of justice to an academic discipline is very attractive. So that attracted me immediately. Being able to develop tools and skill sets that could help to

advocate for people was critically important to me. It's not an end in itself but it was a necessary part of where I wished to go. As I worked closely with it, the structure and the thinking and the way legislation is written and especially the way we see many of the great orators of the world are trained and schooled in the law, I found very attractive. I think that arises if we can take that duality of both what the law has with respect to it's structure but also people who are gifted orators and within that, they can create very real poetry in effect. Well-written legislation has it's has it's own rhythm and structure, so I found that very attractive too. Therefore that was part of the aspiration of what law's potential is and was for me.

[pause] Finally, finally that discipline: at that point of my life I was probably much more undisciplined in my thinking and so it was the mental gymnastics that the law forces you to undertake and adhere to was also [attractive], although hard work and a bit of a pain it was sometimes. The rigour, the rigour of the discipline I was feeling was very helpful and beneficial too.

AKM: Do you have a special orator in the law that you particularly admire, or a speech or, or a legislation?

DS: The written oratory, indeed, ever since the eighties, when I was in real law school certainly some of the pronouncements, the written decisions from the Supreme Court of Canada are just some of the most brilliantly written legal scholarship in the world, bar none, and I mean internationally from academics to, to the judiciary. Bar none. It's fascinating to read.

AKM: And you're speaking as a legal scholar. You went on to the London School of Economics and Politics.

DS: Now you say that but of course the folks I'm seeing I feel that I completely pale in comparison to those really well-schooled folks who are past professors, current professors, other leading lawyers who are just so expert in their field. I just sit back and I'm stunned and amazed at the depth of their knowledge. So, yes the Supreme Court of Canada—and of course Ghandi was a lawyer. Even Winston Churchill, I think he would probably have tipped his hat to Ghandi. [laughter]

AKM: [laughter] True.

DS: So my favourite orator certainly this past century is Martin Luther King and although he wasn't a lawyer that's probably the orator who most impresses, a charismatic orator who I always look up to and listen to frequently.

AKM: You went to Dalhousie.

DS: Yes.

AKM: Why did you choose Dal?

DS: Just after my accident I moved to Thunder Bay. At that point now, I'm a quadriplegic. I would need help in the morning getting dressed. I would need help throughout the day. Although I fought to maintain my independence, I would be as independent as possible, I would need help with the tasks of daily living, from getting up in the morning to having assistance with meal preparation and all that sort of thing. There was no housing available in Toronto. There was no housing available for me in Nova Scotia. And so Thunder Bay did have at that point some apartments with supportive living available.

AKM: Really, why? Why would that be? Because it's not true now, I don't think?

DS: No, although there's long waiting lists. There are problems throughout Ontario but especially in the Toronto area where there are waiting lists for supportive housing and also it's very important to have direct funding for attendant care. Attendant care makes all the difference. And the Ontario government continues to have a freeze on providing that attendant care. That's a critical problem and there's some backsliding that has occurred more recently. Maybe we can talk about that more later though. In Ontario, it began locally with a grassroots organization. At that time there was a wave to deinstitutionalization. Many people with spinal cord injuries had no choice but to go to long term care. And that was the choice of people with spinal cord injuries or quadriplegics in Toronto at that time.

AKM: So had you stayed that would have been where you would have been...

DS: I would have had to go into a nursing home. And that, of course, wasn't an option. And Thunder Bay had these apartments. It had a university. It had some connection with extended family being there. And so at that point it made perfect sense. But I have to certainly say I was profoundly homesick too, for my friends in Halifax. I think much of it was about being still eighteen, nineteen years old, starting university, and, you know, all my friends were back in Halifax. There was that sense of homesickness. And then after I finished my BA that's why I wanted to go to Dal.

AKM: Did you think about joining the bar in Nova Scotia?

DS: Oh yes, certainly. However, after I finished law school, I felt that my education really wasn't done. At that point I certainly contemplated jumping straight into my career, but I felt that my education wasn't completely done. I

had mentioned that I was keenly interested in the dramatic arts in high school and so there was that side, which I thought would be a great addendum to the law and also it was a personal interest. So I moved to Los Angeles for a couple of years prior to going to the London School of Economics. I took acting courses and again, that side, that creative side was a wonderful chance to open it up and be fully immersed in that world. I spent about twenty months there prior to the semester starting for my LLM because I still wanted to go a little further with my education and study international human rights and domestic human rights in a more specialized, or in a more concentrated way. So that's why I went on to do my LLM.

AKM: So when you went to LA you knew you were going to go to London or at least further education in the rights...

DS: Yeah, I was certainly, I was already applying for my LLM. I know I was accepted. I deferred a year so I could stay an extra year in Los Angeles. But ah...

AKM: How was that year?

DS: Oh, that was a wonderful year. It's an expensive place to live for a student, I'll tell you. It was a real eye-opener certainly in many respects. I met a lot of good people. It was very interesting in that industry how everyone is project-to-project driven. It's the world of embellishment. You know when they say "Tinsel town" there's no doubt [it's apt]. For many people there's that driven sense of insecurity that they are only as good as their last project so they are busy trying to, I think, colour the truth about what they're really working on. In some respects it was a pretty bizarre world. And on the other hand, it was a wonderful time meeting interesting people who were very dedicated to their craft, very, very talented actors and artists. So as they say when they call it

show business on one hand the shows and the artistic side is quite extreme, but the business side was quite extreme too.

AKM: You probably enhanced your theatrical abilities and other talents that are very useful for a career in law.

DS: Oh I think so—yeah, yes. [laughter] And so it was great personal experience though.

AKM: Okay. And so then you...

DS: The LSE—[London School of Economics]

AKM: That would be quite a culture shock moving to London, I think, at that point.

DS: Yes, well quite frankly, LA was the bigger culture shock. [laughter]. You know, to go from Halifax to LA was quite a big, big culture shock. And I was thrilled. I love London. I loved it then and I love it now. So I had a great, great time. The LSE is such an international school with students from all over the world, and people studying International development, international human rights. Great speakers are always coming to the school. It was a real at time to thrive intellectually and grow and grow.

AKM: How did it work out for a person with impairments living in London compared to LA, Toronto, Thunder Bay, Halifax?

DS: Every city has it's different areas. One thing that London was very good at even then, and that was in 1991, or '92, most of the cabs, those black cabs, were already wheel-chair accessible.

AKM: I didn't know that.

DS: So you could literally go out your front door and within five minutes probably, find a taxi and get to where you're going.

AKM: Huge!

DS: Huge! Yeah. It's still very difficult in most cities in Canada for a person with a wheelchair to get a taxi and certainly to get one quickly. It's a huge deficit in Canada and it was something that for the most part was taken care of in London if you were willing to pay the cost of a taxi. (Pause) But you know, being an older city things like curb cuts weren't necessarily the norm, and cobblestone you ran into much more frequently and that sort of thing. Many of the old buildings had anywhere from one to ten steps at the front door to get in. So there's all those issues, especially those Edwardian, Victorian-style homes. It definitely had some, some areas that were very progressive. And I don't know—I got around. Although LSE had many old buildings, they made a huge effort to make their campus more accessible. That helped me a lot.

AKM: Was that part of your decision-making to go there?

DS: No, I was driven by a real interest in what they had, the curriculum they had to offer.

AKM: Interesting. So then you came back and then what happened?

DS: I came back and by then my mom was living in Thunder Bay and it made sense to just sort of regroup after all of this travel and after all these other places. I moved to Thunder Bay to do my articles, and started with a legal clinic in Thunder Bay.

AKM: What was it?

DS: It was Kinneya-Aweya Legal Clinic. We were primarily working in property law and learning much about landlord and tenant law, and disability appeals both with respect to Canada Pension, Ontario ODSP, and so I was quite immersed in admin law. Which was great so I really liked it already, so to do your articles primarily in that already was quite a lot of fun. And naturally it made sense to do the bar exam in Ontario. You asked did I think about becoming a member of the bar of Nova Scotia, well, I did, but circumstances just started leaning me that way [to Ontario]. So that's where that decision started to take root. And it was a really great articling experience too.

AKM: How did you get that? Was it difficult to get an articling position?

DS: I think I got lucky. Because of the way the semestering system works in England, I was back later than other students who'd finished in May. And a grant had come up to hire students from a diverse or underrepresented background for articling. I think there were three grants available in Ontario, a sort of one-off governmental grant. I had volunteered at this clinic before I went to law school when I was still an undergrad. Because again, I was interested in the law and I had volunteered in the summer and I thought that made more sense than to find a summer job unrelated. I thought I would just go and volunteer in the area in the career path I wanted to pursue. So, my goodness, it would have been seven or eight years later, but I guess they remembered me and a couple of people from that time were still working there. I met with them for lunch to see if there were possibilities for articling. And at that time, there wasn't but then [it was] pure luck that this grant came along and I was able to find articles. So at that point, when there was no budget for it, I was late arriving, everyone else was placed with articles, it

didn't look very good, and in Thunder Bay there were fewer opportunities, and then out of the blue this spot popped open. And it turned out to be a very good year.

AKM: That's wonderful. So that was '96 you were called to the bar, was it?

DS: Yes. And again because of the semestering, I did my articling in '93/'94 and then went back and did both the writing part of the bar ad program and then in '95 I did the bar ad after that.

AKM: In reading your book I was interested to note that it was only the next year, in '97, that you did your cross Canada tour by wheelchair. And reading about it, you mentioned that one of the reasons that you embarked on such a huge project was to dispel some myths that you felt other people held about you. I wonder if you can talk a little more about that.

DS: Yeah. Well, about me, or it was more about the community in general. People with disabilities. It was about what was their potential. And essentially not necessarily to define what that potential is but to open the door to recognizing, as a broader community, together [we can] open those doors together toward greater opportunities. If that could take root, that sense of opportunity could take root, then that potential can be realized, then participation for people with disabilities in society can be more fully realized. That's why I did it. Again, the timing—I had this dream to do it. I wanted to do it—

AKM: For a while.

DS: —yeah. And I thought well I'd better do it now. If I hang up my shingle and I start to practise, that takes a full commitment and one that isn't just

something to start for a year and stop. So I'd better do this project, do this wheel across Canada now. And again, I was driven very, very, very keen about it and passionate to do it. So I wanted to do that before I started to practise.

AKM: It must have been a transformative experience, was it?

DS: Yes. In many respects, and again it still comes back to me although it was some time ago, with skills, with memories, with emotional content, that's still with me and is still influencing me today. In many respects—it certainly cemented my commitment to this kind of work and it's helped me evolve more fully into both a love, a passionate commitment to human rights. It's given me a strong sense of organizational development, management, and leadership, maybe in a way that I might never have been able to obtain. And of course it was a very intense period, very much about working closely with people in an intense environment, so conflict resolution was very important. Keeping people motivated when they were exhausted was a critical skill to learn.

AKM: Including yourself.

DS: Yes. And on an individual basis, convincing myself that I could keep going, yeah, that was certainly challenging. One thing rugby helped me with is it's a sport that requires a lot of conditioning and the coaches really do push you. So I think that, that sense of being on the road and being quite exhausted sometimes, really did push me now. Now it didn't work all the time.

We were coming into Toronto. I was in Cobourg and I had stopped in Kingston and gone to the Queens' library because I was just finishing my final paper, my thesis for my LL.M. I had finished it, all but for one bibliographic reference. So

I wheeled through Kingston and stopped at the library at Queens, did some extra work there. I finally got that last bit on the bibliography so I could then put it in the courier and send it back to London. But the next morning we had to be up, we had to stick with our schedule because we stopped in Toronto for a week with a full schedule of special events which did include going all the way down Yonge Street, from York City Hall all the way down to just behind Eaton's Centre. So that was up early, we had to stick to a very tight schedule and that meant taking my courier package and meeting somewhere around Brockville on a country road, having the FedEx truck literally pick up my package, [laughter] meet me while I'm wheeling, have the FedEx truck pick up the package that contained my thesis or my final paper to get back to London for a deadline. So that was fixed and then I kept wheeling so with all of the finishing the thesis, staying on the road wheeling (again now it was mid-summer, and very hot, oh sorry June, but still pretty hot out on the road), and as soon as we'd get off the road we'd be planning all the last minute detail—getting toward Cobourg I think you could literally say I fell asleep at the wheel. I just started to just fall—I flipped my chair into a ditch. It rolled one and half times. I landed on my head. I thought that I had broken my neck again because I landed just on my shoulder inside of my head. What I had done was I broke three ribs.

AKM: Very painful.

DS: Oh yeah. And we had, we had—starting the next day, we had all of those events so there I am with three ribs, three broken ribs having to wheel all the way down Yonge Street and do all those events. That was probably one of the hardest, that was the hardest in terms of challenging myself or learning for myself, having done that or these are the things that still influence me today.

AKM: I can appreciate that.

DS: Yeah.

AKM: So then after that year of great drama and personal challenge, and recognition, you come to Thunder Bay and hang up your shingle and you're an ordinary lawyer...

DS: Yeah. Yup.

AKM: Was that hard?

DS: Well, yes. By that point you can imagine I had a sense that I wanted to practise what would be somewhat non-traditional law. And so not many practices in Thunder Bay or around Ontario were really doing that kind of law. In a sense, Thunder Bay was still well in advance of the rest of Ontario in terms of the support systems like attendant care and housing that were available to me. So I had that in Thunder Bay, not available to me in the same fashion in Toronto. So even if there was that kind of work, for example, in Toronto, there wouldn't have been the support systems for me to live fully. And also, there were barriers to break through with larger firms not interested, and now I'll guess I'll have to say this bluntly, not interested in hiring people with disabilities, because in their mind there wasn't a sense we were going to accommodate people with disabilities. You know, they were profit-driven.

AKM: You mean, the difficulty of getting...

DS: They deferred to profit and therefore It was about a perception of productivity. And I was well aware and pragmatic enough to realize I'm going to have to prove my potential of productivity before I become attractive to a firm.

AKM: So, private practice.

DS: Yeah, primarily private practice. So I had to create my own firm and so therefore I became a sole practitioner in order to demonstrate success that could then be leveraged at a later point, to join a larger firm should I wish to do that.

AKM: Had you tried to find either an articling position or a position after your call in a larger firm?

DS: It was um—there were discussions. Ah however, nothing matching up to really be able to get a sense of a concrete commitment there. As I said there was the duality. I still, I also wished to have a non-traditional practice but at the same time pragmatic enough to realize there was an invisible barrier and the best way to break that barrier was for me to begin as a sole practitioner and demonstrate my abilities first.

AKM: And, is that what you did?

DS: Yeah, but then I ended up—[laughter] I ended up enjoying the independence so I pretty much stayed that way so it worked out , it worked out fine. So anyways that was just one decision that led to another and for the most part enjoyed the independence.

AKM: So what has your practice been mostly about?

DS: Well in Thunder Bay, where it's a smaller market, those early days, I was largely doing child welfare and access and custody issues at the provincial court level. And then administrative law, working still with some of the disability appeals, although most of that was at a clinic. Some people would, would still come to me and do other areas. And then, fortunately, the patients rights advisor at the psychiatric hospital called me to see if I wanted to start to do consent and capacity work. So that started an interest in health law. And then shortly after I began to practise, was the first time I became a part-time member with the Ontario Human Rights Tribunal.

AKM: Which you still are, are you?

DS: Well, I went off that for a period and now I'm back, yes, as a part-time member. So fortunately those doors started to open, health law and human rights. Which is really where I always wanted to work anyway. And then a couple of years after that, the meetings and deliberations to construct a UN convention on the rights of people with disabilities had started, so I started to become a volunteer and work with disability rights. And I joined a couple of national NGO boards. So I still kept in order, because in many respects I kept a client base still doing child welfare work, and access and custody, but that work also assisted then in being able to start opening the doors to where my real interest lay which was health law and human rights.

AKM: So you were on the road a lot, it sounds like.

DS: Yes. Yeah I guess in a—[laughter] after I got off the road from that wheel across Canada, it was sort of different. It stopped in many respects.

AKM: Your income, was it all right doing that kind of practice? How did you manage?

DS: Yes. And so what I did was—that's why I say the market was smaller in Thunder Bay and I would do the child welfare and the other work. Much of that was about paying the bills.

AKM: Yes.

DS: Yes. So I used that to create a baseline in order to pay the bills and then do the other work. And slowly, [laughter] what I was hoping, and it slowly started to work out, in early practice it was difficult certainly and definitely my support staff made more than I did. But—and so, as work became more frequent and improved, I was able to take on more of the human rights and health law and less of the other work. I knew that balance would change and that was just part of the plan.

AKM: You mentioned facing discrimination or at least prejudice from the larger law firms. What about the local bar in Thunder Bay?

DS: I've always found Thunder Bay's bar collegial. There is a decent sense of having to work together. I think everyone's aware that this is a small enough city that not only do we have to work together frequently, we have to bump into each other at everywhere from the shopping mall to the hockey rink. So there's a sense of community. For the most part I've had a strong sense that everyone is very professional. Yes, we work in a very intense environment. Sometimes our clients are crisis-driven, which can also impact us. I've always felt though, for the most part, the members of the bar rise above that fray and maintain their professionalism, understanding that there is a dividing point between this adversarial system and our commitment as officers of the court to the further effective administration of justice. I've always sensed that professionalism where everyone understands that dividing point. I know

others have commented on it too, colleagues in Thunder Bay have commented on. That we really want to try to maintain that.

AKM: Yes, Chris Watkins was talking about...

DS: He was saying that too?

AKM: Yes, he was.

DS: Okay, good. See? In other larger centres that can be eroded. We work hard to keep that. I would say, and not just to brag about the Thunder Bay Law Association because I'm a board member, but they do a very effective job in keeping the bar connected too. I think one of the problems, certainly in a larger centre, if members of the bar become too disconnected, it's easier to lose focus of the larger reason for why we're here. In Thunder Bay we have bench and bar gatherings I believe on a quarterly basis, annual conferences....

AKM: You go to those?

DS: —seminars. Yes, I try to attend. [laughter] I have to keep, I always want to keep my Law Society hours you know, those for professional development sessions. But yeah, whenever I'm in town absolutely I'll attend. So the Law Association is very good about bringing members of the bar together outside of just the courtroom. And I think that also helps to engender a sense of collegiality. We get to know each other.

AKM: Hmmm.

DS: And as they say, I hear frequently from a lot of different sources and quite informally, just talking to people their comment is, "You know, we have a really good bar here." You know.

AKM: Hmmm. In 2005 the Law Society put out a study about um, lawyers with disabilities in the province. Are you aware of that study?

DS: Yes, yes.

AKM: Yeah. Did you participate, in the sense of doing interviews or consultations, with it? Do you remember? It's awhile ago I know.

DS: Yeah. It was awhile ago.

AKM: Maybe a telephone meeting.

DS: Yeah, I think I did a telephone call. Yeah.

AKM: And one of the conclusions was that people with disabilities do not tend to stay in the law as long as people [without] disabilities.

DS: Yeah.

AKM: And secondly that isolation, mentoring is extremely important and the Law Society wants to increase that. So you mentioned about the Thunder Bay and the lack of isolation there, within the bar. What about mentoring opportunities or who were your mentors?

DS: Funny, I was having that discussion just last night because I'm still looking for one. [laughter]

AKM: Really?

DS: So what I decided to do ah, and I was very aware that I wanted to find one. I took the approach that there wasn't just one. I know there was a couple of professors who I really, I really respected and I thought were wonderful role models.

AKM: At Dal[housie]?

DS: Yeah, at Dal. Thrilled to model, can't say so much my career, but my sense of principles anyway after them. Um but, yeah, in terms of who would be a huge role model, mentor or a person with a disability there's someone who is so is huge say for example like a Franklin Roosevelt, huge obviously, but he wasn't available. [laughter]

AKM: No. [laughter]

DS: But there really wasn't [anyone]. If I looked at someone who was twenty years older than me, when I started my career who had a disability that I could turn to—at the time I knew that Chief Justice Dickson was an amputee but I didn't pick up the phone to call him [laughter]. I decided to take mentorship by committee. In a sense, not really focused that I would like to find a senior lawyer with a disability working in human rights, in general who could've checked off all the criteria. So instead I found there's been several, but maybe, like I say, mentorship by committee where's there's been different skills sets or different points within my career or intellectual development. And I've not closed my mind to thinking, well they just have to have a disability. It's been more about do they reflect the kind of aspirations and principles that I admire, where I would like to follow. So there's been some in

the NGO field, for example, the current Executive Director of Canadian Paraplegic Association of Ontario. His name is Bill Adair. I don't know if he even realizes how much of a mentor he is to me. I watch him. I'm guided by his style. I'm very interested in watching how he leads groups, his managerial style, his commitment to strong policy change and public advocacy. No, he's not a lawyer, but he's been very effective at changing, well, thousands of peoples lives for the better. So that's someone I watch. And then there's others who, who I also turn to either for advice or in effect, you know, stay and watch from afar and try to learn.

AKM: Yes. Because your field, your chosen field is specialized and has international aspects.

DS: Yeah. Yeah. There—and I mentioned Martin Luther King. I'll put on those CDs and listen or read. So you know, in a sense, there's so many influences.

AKM: You mentioned Chief Justice Dickson. Are you aware of other lawyers from the past? I know you have an interest in history too, in terms of policy towards people with disabilities. But in the process of this project we've discovered a few lawyers in the past that have had disabilities. And I wonder if you're aware of them?

DS: A role model and mentor for me was a gentleman named Don Curran. He started the Canadian Paraplegic Association in Nova Scotia. He went to Dalhousie Law School. He was injured as a pilot in World War II and became a paraplegic and then went to law school. And then—in addition to having his law degree also founded the Nova Scotia Paraplegic Association and also got the Order of Canada. In many respects he's been a real role model and I found him to be a true gentleman.

AKM: It's interesting because with people with disabilities are a community. Would you agree?

DS: Yes.

AKM: But it's a different kind of diverse community than say Italian Canadian lawyers or people organized around the sexual orientation difference. Do you want to talk about that? The nature of community.

DS: [pause] Maxine Tynes who's a poet who recently passed away, she was a dear friend. Another mentor. In fact she had a disability, polio and post-polio. She's from Nova Scotia and amongst her poetry she often talked about her place in society as an African, as a woman who is African Nova Scotian. But also, one of her poems is about her disability and she talked about that cross-sectional theme. I thought she summed it up very well. It is about...it is very much about access, wanting to access the larger community. Access the world of able-bodied. And that word, 'access,' I like to think is about participating. Knowing that as a person with a disability that there are many false perceptions, many invisible barriers that are just that—the invisibility is in fact, when pierced, the invisibility should be a negation. Because it's so easy to, to remove those barriers. So often they are ones of perception.

AKM: But they are easy to remove, those?

DS: Yeah, yeah I could talk about that. The line of difference between disability and able-bodied is so much thinner than we perceive. But for people with the disability it still profoundly impacts their life. And you know, she talks about that cross-sectional driving theme within disability [more] than it is about access and participation. And, and somehow piercing that um, that very thin,

thin barrier, thin but profound barrier of—well, the thin barrier perception. And that's why I say, in fact you know, in my view it's so easily truly a negation but um [laughter] in reality, it's not. And in one of her poems she talks about this. So I thought that that really, really captured the theme. However for people with disabilities it's—it's not that same, there's not a strong collective sense of identity beyond that because there's so many different types of disabilities. [Sigh] In the broader climate, the broader community, there's still a lot of residual fear of disability (I mean that from an able bodied community perspective), fear of disability and misunderstanding—some outdated superstitions.

AKM: Have you experienced those yourself?

DS: Oh, yeah. All of them. Frequently. Yeah. Much of it is just about concrete lack of education. But some, you know, is just a fear. And for example, and you see this played out in a lot of the fundraising and charity events for disability. The way they get people to dig into their pocket and give is to make them fear they may get the disability. Whether it's muscular dystrophy or what's happening with so often with spinal cord injury: "What could be worse then to get a spinal cord injury? If you got a spinal cord injury, what would you do?" Well right now you could do nothing but give to a cure so they do perpetuate a fear, a fear within that this could happen to able bodied public, this could happen to them. So even the disability community is complicit in this too.

AKM: Is saying that. Sure.

DS: So you have the able-bodied community thinking, "Oh my god." There's a latent sort of subconscious fear and concern about disability, and just ignorance. And also the disability community in many respects needs to be blamed for it too for not changing because they know that they'll keep their

organizations alive if they keep the able bodied public afraid and therefore giving to their charity. [laughter] And finally that broader sense of a group that has been discriminated against, and this often in the literature about groups that feel stigmatized, is a sense of learned subordination. A lot of people with disabilities have a sense, you know they so often have been told they will not achieve, they start to believe it.

AKM: Hmmm.

DS: So all that leads to—[regarding] that strong sense of community, a lot of people with disabilities they also don't want to perceive themselves as disabled. You mentioned Italian Canadian or other groups, are very proud of their heritage, their common denominators, very proud of their heritage, there isn't a strong movement of what we call disability pride. [laughter] And I think all of these are factors weaving into that, that sense of identity for people with disabilities that makes it a more vague, fractious community, not just diverse but fractious, with an overarching common denominator that Maxine Tynes I thought identified so well.

AKM: Interesting. You mentioned about piercing this barrier between the two, partly by knowledge or by dispelling ignorance. Is that what you have to do, for instance, personally with clients, when a client comes in? They're looking at you...

DS: That—I continue to be surprised by just how much my clients do not do that. When they come to me, they want a problem solver. If I am there to solve problems and advocate for them, they do not, they do not get hung up on those kind of perceptions. That's been my experience anyway. And they want to see someone prepared to be a champion for them whilst there in this situation of crises.

AKM: So you're a lawyer to them.

DS: Yeah. That was funny, I've been doing criminal law recently. I was down at the jail cell. So I dropped the child welfare and doing criminal law to fill the gaps more recently. So I was down in the jail cells and, it wasn't my client but it was just by the bull pen, someone yells out, "Hey, ever cool man. There's a lawyer in a wheelchair" [laughter] And it was just, it wasn't about, they didn't say, as they would say in the jails, "Oh fuck, he's in a chair." There's nothing derogatory about it. Just it's more, "Oh cool, that's interesting." But what they're looking for is someone to guide and be problem solver. So yeah, I found it quite remarkable. No my clients don't—I'm trying to think of even one case where it's been an issue, but no, no—except for one woman I refused to take on as a client because she had just, ironically, an half an hour earlier, and an able bodied person, she had taken my wheelchair accessible parking spot and then—[laughter] And I'm sitting there and I've got no parking spot so I have to go park far away. And then she comes in the door and then, "Oh, well okay, it's a conflict of interest and I can't help you."

AKM: Did you tell her why?

DS: Yeah.

AKM: And what did she say?

DS: "Oops." [laughter] I don't know if she's taken accessible parking since then.

AKM: Probably not. Speaking of issues like that, what about structural barriers? Courthouses are old, a lot of them. How do you manage the business of showing up where you're suppose to show up. As a lawyer, is that difficult?

DS: Yeah, sometimes. Sometimes there's lots of architectural barriers. I'm so thrilled, in Thunder Bay they're about to build a new courthouse and that should be a great change. For the most part, I would say the judiciary and, well, both the bench and bar are very understanding, patient if there are accessibility issues. The management at the courthouse have made many efforts to make their courthouse more accessible in the past twenty years.

AKM: Do you think because of you being there?

DS: I think that has had some influence. But I think they've been driven by a sense of —a generational change. This is a sign of the times. They have to do it. Not just have to, I think many of them want to do it. You know, it's a project they kind of enjoy.

AKM: Are there things you cannot do still because of architectural barriers or services you cannot provide as a lawyer?

DS: Oh, I should add one other thing too. The biggest difference, as it is, as whether it's at home or at work, is the actual people, the support staff. That makes the difference. So often if I've got to speed along, or just get transportation to the courthouse or whatever, that's what's filled the gap, is having a support staff who make the difference.

AKM: So at home or Thunder Bay you would have your regular staff that help you. When you come to Toronto or somewhere else, how does that work?

DS: Someone travels with me. Someone has to travel with me. So although you know you say no barrier has become an absolute barrier in stopping me...

AKM: Yes.

DS: ...I've just had to find different ways, different ways of doing it. For example, a glaring one is, when I went to the Supreme Court I was representing an intervener in a VIA Rail matter. There's no wheelchair accessibility through the front door at the Supreme Court of Canada.

AKM: Wow.

DS: Which I'm galled by.

AKM: Wow.

DS: So I had to take the ugly little back door, at the back corridor in order to get in. So that's how I had to get in. And then go through security and then take elevator A and elevator B until I could finally get up, and there's a clear barrier. Everyone else can arrive and go through the front door and get there in a timely fashion. All of a sudden, by the time I finally went through all of those checks, It was now—I had I lost twenty minutes. Which is pretty important when you're getting ready. And you're trying to put your mind to attending court and still leave time to put your robes on and do all those other things that everyone else is doing. And now you've just lost twenty minutes, just to get through the doors. So these are the things that always come up, always come up unexpectedly and you always have to come up with new and creative ways to get around.

And so ultimately I recall about the Supreme Court is, the last thing as I was leaving the building, that it was such a maze and a problematic maze that I just left through the back with the delivery trucks through the garage.
[laughter]

AKM: [laughter]

DS: And I thought that was fitting. [laughter] And I really hope that the National Capital Commission addresses that issues. It would be very easy to give access. Certainly if you read the judgements of the Supreme Court you would think they would be in favour of helping—

AKM: Absolutely.

DS: —people with wheelchairs coming through the front door, not the back door.

AKM: Well, despite your trials, that was a very successful Supreme Court appearance. Was it not?

DS: Yes, yeah.

AKM: And maybe we can talk about that now. I mean, the whole period that you've been a lawyer has been a period of remarkable excitement around the field of inclusion for people with disabilities and so forth. Except perhaps lately, things have changed. So if you're adding of people sort of recent chapter to your book, *Six Degrees of Dignity*, what would you be talking about now, that would cover the period say from 2005 to today?

DS: Yeah. Um—here is—it's evolving. I mean, the generation of disability, the civil rights, follow very much on the coattails of major civil rights movements of the twentieth century. When we think of the African American movement, feminism, and other major, major movements, for people with disability it started in the seventies, out of Berkeley with the independent living movement. Now I think it was 1975, the United States Vocational

Rehabilitation Act was passed. That was very much about drawing that dividing line between people with disabilities [and others]. What is a handicap? Well, a handicap is environmentally based. It's a handicap in the environment. A handicap is not an individual. An individual has a disability but it's not, it doesn't define the individual. And you know, I guess it wasn't the first time this was discussed but in many respects it was now encapsulated into legislation. It started to gain traction, in other words, the social model of disability gained traction within the literature and within the discourse, normal discourse. Prior to that, it had been about a medical model, or in other words labelling or defining people by their disability, or labelling them by what are their perceived limitations rather than their perceived potentials. And not saying it's about a limiting environment.

Now that, that concept's evolved much more, you know, it's very much cause and effect, and it's interrelated with society, the individual, their community, their culture, you know. Now, and it isn't just the duality of the 1970s discussion. But I think that started the discourse but now it's evolved to a biopsychosocial model as opposed to a just a social model.

AKM: Hmmm.

DS: To that degree, I would say the judiciary has to catch up a bit. They've come a long way again, in Canada. They are more advanced, probably, than just about any place in the world in the evolution of legal theory. However, you know, it keeps nudging along. It still has to evolve. There's still some further evolution both at the Supreme Court of Canada and at the Human Rights Tribunals—but still I think probably close to the most advanced in the world. That said, in the last five years there has been a refinement of the social model of disability to becoming a much more cause-and-effect or interrelated

between individuals and society and bringing in cultural norms. There's been a refinement of the social model of disability.

AKM: Can you give me a bit more, an example of that?

DS: Yeah. [pause] You know, for example, the argument, if it's just a social model, if it's just a classical social model of disability, they say the person using a wheelchair wishes to, wishes to apply for a job, a job. They go to the job interview, there's steps in the way, so they can't attend the job interview. Well, you know that's a classic environmental barrier. Well, if you put up a ramp well then you know, they have equal access. Well, the model toward accommodating that person is somewhat more blended. (A) the person with a disability can't just say well, they built the ramp and the analysis is over. Also the person with the disability might on occasion feel sick. You know you either get the flu or have for example a bladder infection or some of the things that do effect people with spinal cord injuries. Therefore it's much more interrelated than just saying, "Build a ramp and the analysis is over." When I say [inaudible]—to also look at what are the true physical factors of the disability without negating it. Because in the nineteenth century and the earlier part of the twenties or the first three quarters of the twentieth century very much, for the most part the medical model was about creating prejudice. There can be a new level of a relationship though with medical practitioners. You know, they're not all the enemy. In many respects their expertise can be exploited in a partnership now. And I think you start getting much more toward an environment of non-discrimination, where a person with a disability focuses on themselves to create the most healthy individual they possibly can. They also will still advocate or discuss whether they need environmental barriers changed. And then more broadly, when I say it's interrelated, finding out what is that, the interrelationship of the two so that the individual develops the best model in order for them to reach their potential.

AKM: So it's a refinement and gathering of knowledge on the part of people with disabilities but also with medical and perhaps other groups—

DS: And employers or the broader community.

AKM: —employers and so forth. So this is what is happening, good.

DS: Yeah, working together in a much more holistic way.

AKM: Yes. Okay. I understand.

DS: And a holistic way that applies human rights principles. So, it's an exciting time. You know, the duty to accommodate has come a long way but it's a dynamic time for the duty to accommodate people with disabilities as a legal concept.

AKM: Do you feel—

DS: Oh, so there's that—and while it's a dynamic time, I do feel that the judiciary has some catching up to do. Secondly, there is impact from the 1990's when there was such very severe budget cuts in Ontario and at the federal level. And that has effected a lot of disability support programs. It's eroded them. So there has been some back-pedaling.

AKM: That's still lasting from that.

DS: Yes. Yeah no, they haven't just jumped back to where they were at all.

AKM: No. And of course the current environment—

DS: And now the recession, yeah. It's a double layer. So it's going to be very difficult and I see this within the disability committee, within the, we call them DPOs instead of NGOs, "Disabled Peoples' Organizations," so within the Ontario and national DPOs they're working, they're very busy trying to come up with new solutions as organizations. Fortunately, because of the developments since the seventies, there's a real critical mass of people who are experts in what's now the disability consumer perspective. And able, too, and strong, and there's a lot of intellectual fervour so they work in partnership with government and medical practitioners and other sectors to come up with new solutions. Coalition building is a big part of this, to come up with best practices based on you know, a reality. There's another thing in the last five years. They are much less radical and far more pragmatic to come up with evidence-based solutions or evidence-based policy proposals. So that would be, I think, a new drive, is a new drive towards a pragmatic yet progressive evidence-based policy change. Yeah, refinement of the model, the policy evident—I think there might be a sense in '05, I talked in my book *The Six Degrees of Dignity* about it being important to galvanize the community, because it is so fractious, galvanize it toward one large, over-arching, big goal. And at that time, I was still working on the UN Convention, the CRPD convention, or the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities, and clearly this was a way to get everyone under one tent and create a common sense of destiny, a common mission amongst all these groups. Now, that it's been signed and ratified by Canada and the High...

AKM: This year!

DS: Yes, yeah. This year or last year, whatever. Now I think we're up to 104 or 109 countries have ratified it and many more have signed it. The common goal now is going to be implementation. And in a way that's where the hard

word starts. But it's much less galvanizing, you now, you have to work and go to meetings, there's bureaucrats, and close the doors and get to work around the table.[laughter]

AKM: Less interesting for you?

DS: Well you know—[laughter]. Hmm, sometimes yeah, I have to admit. Well it's harder work. In that respect, you've got to really put in a lot of hours. It's so—But, so, since the last five years, now what is the next big thing? And right now I don't know what that is. Um, you know, the next big thing really is implementation. But if you say that into a microphone for the media—

AKM: [laughter].

DS: [laughter] You know, the movement is waiting for the next, the next big thing. And I would like to think the next big thing can be a sophistication of the model. You know, I talked about that holistic approach to disability. Maybe now it can be about people with disabilities moving toward a—a greater sense of empowerment and an equal place within society. So the next thing is about, is in a sense a, a post-modern or a post disability rights movement model to one of just taking their place within a non-discrimination framework. Sounds very um, you know, potentially banal.

AKM: [laughter]

DS: But that's what's been so important for the past thirty years, you know, so or thirty-five years.

AKM: What about your own focus—in this last five years?

DS: Now maybe my focus is, one piece, disability. Obviously I will never, and nor do I really care to ever sort of negate it, or forget it, is to moving to expanding my interests in human rights and health law still. They are so related. I mean, health law still so much about respecting individual liberty, and it is, especially in the consent and capacity area, it is where civil rights collides with the medical model. And trying to, you know it really does have that meeting point and I find that a fascinating interplay. Um so it has all kinds of human rights components. It is broadening my, my work, you know, beyond disability rights. Certainly disability rights is a piece, but it's certainly for the last five years it's been a piece, a piece of the work. And I want to work, I guess you can say, almost mainstream, but work in much more broadly with all aspects of human rights. That would be...it's just not disability but all groups who might be affected.

AKM: So how—does that mean your membership in organizations, your leadership in different organizations?

DS: I've been very careful, since I've become a member of the Ontario Human Rights Tribunal, I've stayed on the right side of that fence. So for me, right now, it's been about working, working with that organization to address issues, broadly, of human rights, whether it's issues of racism, homophobia, sexual harassment, you know, all of that, to address it and apply the rule of law. So that's been my interest. That's what I mean by, you know, very broadly all the components of human rights now, that affect the entire community.

AKM: And how do you work that with your practice? Do you have X many days that you do it?

DS: Yeah, yeah pretty much. You know, there's assignments. You get assigned work with the tribunal a month in advance. Then I work my other practice around that. And that's —again, I have to be very careful that I only work with files that are not in conflict, you know.

AKM: Yes. I just think about all the areas of your interest including your poetry and creative work and so forth. Your organizational abilities must be tremendous to be able to put it all together, and your support as you say.

DS: That, that's key. The support is key. Sometimes I think the organization, or the time management is lacking. It's just you know, I try to do my best and keep improving that skill.

AKM: Well, like all lawyers, the time, the life work balance—

DS: Oh it is. It is, yeah.

AKM: Right, is an issue. Yeah.

Is there anything else that you would like to talk about, David, this morning?
Or wished I'd ask you about?

DS: Yeah. Sure, other than, or maybe just touch on that too, and that's been personally the thing I've really worked on is finding that time, that life-work balance, and in terms of the other work. You know, I'm in a good relationship now and it's been very good the last few years, and she and her daughter, you know, for the first time in my life I feel like I have a really decent, you know, nuclear family. You know?

AKM: Wonderful.

DS: So that's been, that's been a change. Change in the last five years. It's a wonderful feeling. Um the—I guess, there's been sort of a new impact. After I finished skydiving—

AKM: Yes. [laughter]

DS: Yeah. And I—oh, this was bizarre. I was up twenty eight thousand feet, and I thought, “You are the biggest fool in the world.” I was looking down from twenty eight thousand feet at the edge of an airplane. And I had to jump and the tandem master is behind me—The idea was we were going to...we velcro-ed our legs together and then hoped, hoped the body straps...and he said, “Oh yeah, I've done this many times before.” Halfway down, we had air pilot helmets on and we could only communicate with these wires. Halfway down, he said, “We have to have a change in our landing protocol.” I'm now down to somewhere around eight or ten thousand feet. [laughter] He tells me! “The plan's changing and we're not going to land the way we said originally! He said, “What I'll do then, I'll be behind you. I'll swing my legs up. We'll catch air in the parachute. We'll land on my (his) bum and I'll be on (his) lap.” So, comfortable. The field was very wet that day. It was December in Mississippi. And it all seemed very, very good. I had confidence in him, misplaced confidence. When he said the landing protocol was going to change, we had to splat in a belly flop with me under him. And the parachute therefore couldn't um, turn backward to catch air. It had to turn the other way. So we picked up speed in the last fifty feet. And I crushed my top left femur.

And um, so I had to get a partial hip replacement. And around that time too, in the period from '06 to, goodness, early '10, I had a chronic bladder infection. Thankfully, since then, something, something fixed itself in February. So I had a three-year chronic infection that fortunately has cleared

itself. So the horrible impact of that is that clearly whatever this bug was it was mutating, it had become a superbug and I nearly died, just from that chronic infection. It was continuing to be dealt with from, first, lower level antibiotics, that didn't affect it. Then it was the higher, higher impact drugs, and then we were down to three antibiotics that could work. They had to be taken intravenously. And after those stop working you've got no options. Fortunately, somewhere around March of '10, so yeah, a little over a year and a half ago, it cleared itself up. But after three years of that, combined with the crushed femur and returning from that—that happened in December '09—then in February '10, then I went and broke my right, just going through my front door. My foot caught on my metal door and I got a spiral fracture. So I had a full leg cast, right from hip down to ankle on my other leg. So battling three years of UTIs, rehabilitating at least six months with my left hip, and then dealing with my right leg, another three months, all at the same time. Oh and then trying to keep the practice going and still working with the Tribunal, and keeping going full time, really did force me to, to reflect (after this cleared up and my bones healed), thinking in terms in a sense of work-life balance, I think there's been a new sense of, of peace. Just a classic sense of taking each day to truly appreciate what you, what you have here and now. Maybe it's caused me to refine my goals, and I talk about human rights, of a deeper dedication to, to the law and human rights. And also a deeper dedication to reflection upon it and trying to work with the dignity and self worth component of human rights. And that's something much, much far beyond legal practice or any judicial decision making. It's about a lifestyle and wanting to in a sense, you know, be good to individuals, work toward developing what be called the, "good community." So I guess, a deeper but also I hope, a more timed approach. If it were, you know, say, ten years ago, I might have been more frenetic. I hope now it's more focused and reflective, and hopefully it achieves more after have gone—so yes, I had my disability, my accident, thirty years ago but there's been that other wave just very recently, in, I

guess, early middle age to kind of I think cause a new profound influence on my life.

AKM: What about the skydiving, a major rethink on those kinds of expeditions?

DS: In terms of projects and expeditions—It really did bring to light about thinking through the risk element.

AKM: Risk, yeah.

DS: [I] wheeled across Canada and it was fraught with risk, including going into that deep ditch, I should have and could have ended up with a serious brain injury really. Um

AKM: But you were very young too, then.

DS: Yeah, I was lucky and I was very young. Yeah, so the three ribs and you know, it's almost like this new challenge, I'm going to do seven days of special events. "Yeah, I'm in a heck of a lot of pain but I'm going to fight through that." And once I healed, I didn't give it too much more of a second thought and just completed the wheel across. And going to the North Pole still with those UTIs, and so that caused, for people with spinal cord injuries, autonomic dysreflexia, you break into a cold sweat. I'm on the North Pole already with compromised ability for thermal retention because I have compromised circulation. I'm fighting a UTI with a cold sweat, and it's fifty five below zero and I'm fighting all this other stuff—that was clearly a high risk element but we planned very, very well ahead. By planning, we stayed well within any margins of safety. The sky dive, I think I entrusted too much to others to who had my life in their hands. I do like to delegate, I delegate and I believe in trusting others but in this case since my life was in his hands, I

should have been a little more hands on. [laughter] So the risk element, and, and also those major events...certainly it's clear once you do those major events, it's very important then to take, to pull from them the, the best results and apply them then on the ground—they make awareness but they're not just a media event. They should be used then for the awareness raised, to try to give it awareness and, and organizational development that hopefully grows so much I don't even see all. So that's been very much about the work, to get back on the ground and roll up my sleeves and do a day job. And to work with other organizations and helping them with their building. So I guess that's maybe affected my thinking, and much more thinking about risk taking. Maybe a more mature sense of what the potential of these major events could be and therefore, an understanding and commitment that the principles and the cause behind what you're doing is far more important than the individual who's doing it. And so adherence and wanting to work toward that greater good. It's been a combination of both since the injuries and the illness recently and then maybe a more mature reflection upon what those major events can do. And I hope that that means that's better. I'm hoping that means it takes the ego out of it, and it's about what you're doing for other people. I think that was always there but I think there's just a deeper sense of that now.

AKM: Thank you, David.

DS: You're welcome.

